

“Was a Pinky, Now a Pacifier” The Dad Life, Six Words at a Time

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By Larry Smith

I am an extremely proud new papa, but not the type of guy to keep a baby memory book. That said, I never want to forget the amazing things that my son Lukas is doing every day as he grows and changes at an astonishing rate. And given how much any new parent's brain so closely resembles a melting box of crayons, I know if I don't get the memories logged somehow, much will be lost. What to do?

As the founder of the Six-Word Memoir project ([watch this video](#) for its backstory and global appeal), a storytelling exercise in which you describe any or all of your life in exactly six words, I've been doing what I do best: processing the world six-word bites.

Each time my son Lukas or I experience a new milestone or major emotion, I've written a Six-Word Memoir. From the day he was born during a snowstorm this past January ("Hitchhiked to delivery room—blizzard boy!") to his newest trick last week ("Found my feet, ain't that neat?"), we've been documenting our life six words at a time.

Here are a few Six-Word Memoirs I've written on my new-dad life, with a backstory or lesson learned for each. I invite you to share your Six-Word Memoir on the dad, mom, or any other part of your life on the [Six-Word Memoir project](#).

"Was a Pinky, Now a Pacifier"

Who knew there's nothing tastier than daddy's pinky? I had no idea. As much as I really wanted to be a parent, I admittedly hadn't paid much attention to the particulars of my friends' and family's newborns. Never changed a diaper, gave a bottle, or burped anyone but myself. And I was evidently the last person on earth to realize that among the more useful appendages of a parent is his pinky.

"So Much Crying. The Baby, Too"

Here's the not-so-secret reality of the first few months of parenting: it's pretty awful. Don't get me wrong, I am so grateful for this creature. Still, it wasn't like I was bored or even felt that one can't lead a full life without kids. And during those first few months full of so many nights where he's screaming at 3am for no reason that I can discern save for the fact that he's a baby—and he just won't [go the f**k to sleep](#)—most of my thoughts revolved around buying a one-way ticket to Mexico. All three of us survived those first few months, but there's a reason that when I walk around wearing a T-shirt with the above six words on it, I get a lot of knowing nods.



"Baby Slept Eight; Dad is Reborn"

The only people I believe are qualified to give new parents advice are other parents with kids less than a year old. So when friends with a six-month old assured me that at some point my kid would sleep five, six, maybe even seven hours straight at night and it would be a total game changer for my wife and me, I trusted they were speaking the truth. The first night Lukas shocked us with an out-of-nowhere eight hours, I felt like a new man. Eight remains rare, but even now his regular six and seven-hour stretches have made me feel more human again. I loved him just as much when he only slept two to three hours at a time, but I love life a lot more now.

“These Cheeks Were Made for Kissing.”

Lukas is my mother-in-law’s first grandchild. Needless to say she’s delighted. During her last visit, she held up this 14 lb. 8 oz. ball of beauty and proclaimed, in six perfect words: “These cheeks were made for kissing.” We keep those cheeks very busy these days.

"Lactating Woman Offered Boob During Flight"

A series of unavoidable events resulted in Lukas and I first spending three days (and very long nights) in San Francisco by ourselves, and then taking a cross-country flight home. By the time we boarded the plane I was an exhausted, overwhelmed wreck, frightened for the cross-country trip in front of us.

I was a mess, but my boy was amazing, taking it all in stride. Everyone on the plane was wonderful: flight attendants cooed and coddled us; an empathetic dad gave me 800mg of Advil; and as I stood in aisle trying rock the baby to sleep in my arms, a woman walked over and offered to breastfeed him. No, really, she did. She wasn’t kidding about her ability to lactate (despite, she explained, not having breastfed in a year) as Lukas was like a rabid little animal when he was near her. As I told this story to my wife the next day, she listened, horrified, and then breathed a loud sign of relief over the phone when I told her I declined the offer. And earned my daddy stripes.

“Pregnancy is Poetry. Parenting is Prose.”

This six-worder is a play on former New York Governor Mario Cuomo’s famous line, “You campaign in poetry, you govern in prose.” When I posted this memoir to the site it was one of the ones that people most responded to, in part, I think, because the words both explain themselves and because you can create your own interpretation. For me, I have always put pregnant women (and especially my wife) on a pedestal: [they just look so beautiful](#) as they go through so many major mind and body changes. However dreamy that vision may be, once the baby arrived, I felt like it was all business.

“Parenting: Idiot. Expert. Idiot. Expert. Idiot.”

It’s amazing how some part of your baby’s life consumes you. Like a lot of new parents, our baby had bad gas. For two weeks our whole life was about gas—we read the books and the blogs; consulted doctors and friends; my little sister, mother of two small boys, would text over advice about techniques and gripe water. At some point we mastered gas, or maybe it just moved on, and I felt like I was Parent of the Year. Until...the next mystifying thing happens. And I’m an idiot all over again. One suspects this patterns repeats it self for the next twenty or so years.

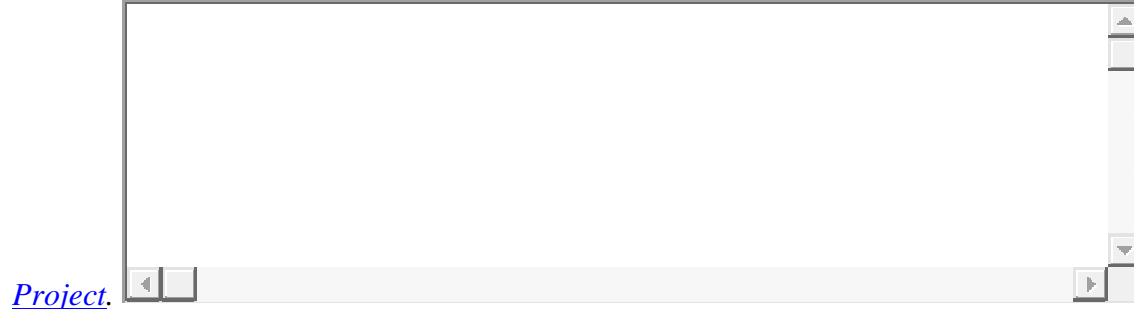
“You Will Find It All Out”

I’m not a stay-at-home dad, but I’ve spent a lot of time with Lukas in my neighborhood, often walking with him in a sling, Kangaroo-like. We live in Park Slope, Brooklyn. aka Baby Central, and a bit notorious for its cadre of moms offering perhaps a bit too much unsolicited advice. I,

for one, enjoy the advice, which indeed arrives from moms, dads, and old Italian women (usually telling me the sling is bad for Lukas' back).

On a recent Sunday morning, as I walked out of a bank strolling my kid, exhausted, trying not to spill coffee on him, money falling out of my pocket, an older guy held the door for me and helped me pull myself together. "Thank you so much," I said, "I'm still learning how to operate this thing." He smiled the smile of a man who's been there and back a couple of times and offered me truest six words yet: "You will find it all out."

Larry Smith is the founder and editor of SMITH Magazine, home of the [Six-Word Memoir](#)



Summing Up a Father's First Year

By [TARA PARKER-POPE](#)



Larry Smith and his son, Lukas.



As the creator of [Six-Word Memoirs](#), Smith Magazine founder Larry Smith has encouraged people to process many of life's most interesting moments in six-word sound bites.

Now a new father, Mr. Smith has found a limitless source of six-word inspiration in his son. This weekend, he recently recounted some of his experiences in his first year of fatherhood in an essay on the [Isis parenting blog](#).

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Here are some of Mr. Smith's other six-word parenting memories:

So Much Crying. The Baby, Too.

Baby Slept Eight; Dad is Reborn.

These Cheeks Were Made for Kissing.

Parenting: Idiot. Expert. Idiot. Expert. Idiot.